



Testimony in Opposition to Governor's Bill No.828
(LCO No. 3066)

Presented by
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The Trust for Public Land
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To: Chair and Members of the Committee on Appropriations:

On behalf of the Trust for Public Land, I would like to express strong opposition to Governor Rell's proposal to transfer \$12M from the Community Investment Act account to the General Fund for fiscal years ending June 30, 2010 and 2011 under Section 1(w) of Governor's Bill No. 828.

By way of introduction, The Trust of Public Land, a national non-profit organization, works in partnership with landowners, community groups and national, state and local agencies to protect land for public enjoyment. Our Connecticut office is located in New Haven and over the past 15 years we have protected more than 6000 acres in over 60 Connecticut communities.

The Community Investment Act (CIA) funds have enabled our partners to protect working farms, forestland and open space that otherwise would have been lost forever to development; the programs that are funded through this account have become the backbone of land preservation in the State of Connecticut.

If there is any silver ("green") lining to these challenging economic times, it is that there has never been a better market, at least in recent years, to purchase land for conservation. Without a market for development, landowners are anxious to sell; and with land prices being at a record low, communities and land trusts are anxious to buy. However, without state funding to help finance these transactions, towns and land trusts will be unable to take advantage of these conservation opportunities.

The Governor's proposal, which will essentially deplete the CIA account, reflects a perception that land conservation is a luxury that the state should set aside during these challenging economic times. We strongly take issue with this position and contend that land conservation is just as important to our economy as any other real estate transaction. Open space, farmland and historic property preservation enhance the quality of life in our communities; help to increase the value of neighboring properties; bring customers to Connecticut restaurants and shops after they have spent a day hiking in a local park; enable farmers to earn a living by producing local food for Connecticut residents; and help keep people employed – from project managers such as myself to the attorneys, appraisers, title searchers, environmental consultants and other professionals with whom we work.

In conclusion, using this vital source of conservation funding for other purposes will likely do little to ease the state's budget crisis but it will undoubtedly have a devastating and irreversible affect on land preservation in the State of Connecticut. The Trust for Public Land respectfully urges the committee to preserve the Community Investment Act account so that it may continue to fund the critically important programs that enhance the quality of life and economy in the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.



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